

## Appendix II

# Training Needs Assessment

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## What, Why and How

Are you charged with the task of having your employees trained but do not know where to start? Consider performing a training needs assessment first. You'll optimize the benefit to your employees while saving on the bottom line.

### What is a training needs assessment?

A tool utilized to identify what educational courses or activities should be provided to employees to improve their work productivity. Focus should be placed on needs as opposed to desires.

For example, training dollars would be better spent on a new employee in the accounting department who needs to learn Microsoft Excel for their job duties as opposed to learning Microsoft Publisher which the employees want but does not need.

### Why conduct a training needs assessment?

- To pinpoint if training will make a difference in productivity and the bottom line.
- To decide what specific training each employee needs and what will improve their job performance.
- To differentiate between the need for training and organizational issues.

### How is a training needs assessment performed?

There are several techniques that can be utilized individually or in combination with each other. More than one tool should be considered to get a better view of the big picture, however, which tools are used should be left up to company.

#### 1. Meet with management.

Since most supervisors are involved with the planning of projects and the future of the company, they know what will be needed. They should be able to communicate where their employee's current abilities lie and what is needed to get them to the next level for new projects on the horizon.

#### 2. Meet with employees.

Discuss what struggles they may be facing from day-to-day and what would make their job easier and more efficient. Remember to keep them focused on what they need rather than what they want.



## Appendix II

### 3. Conduct surveys.

Surveys are beneficial because many people can be polled in a short period of time. Additionally, surveys provide employees with the opportunity to confess a need on paper that they may be too embarrassed to admit needing in a face-to-face meeting.

Surveys should take the form of a questionnaire and can include close-ended or open-ended questions, or a series of both. Close-ended questions require the respondent stay within certain perimeters set by the person who created the survey. Being that the answers are limited, tabulating the data is simple. Open-ended questions allow an employee to provide more feedback and introduce new ideas that may not have been considered initially, although tallying the results may be more difficult. A good option during the creation of a survey would be to include a combination of both close-ended and open-ended questions.

### 4. Conduct focus groups.

Focus groups allow for small group interaction, allowing the assessor to uncover details about their target audience. Brainstorming is encouraged allowing for an exchange of new ideas and a revelation of what training may be needed. They should be at least ninety minutes long to initially break the ice and for participants to become comfortable enough to express their thoughts. Depending on time limits, focus groups can be held once or repeatedly.

### 5. Review company goals and mission statement.

A brief review of the company's past and where they are headed for the future may reveal valuable information for training. A comparison should be made of what employees are currently doing and what will be expected of them as the company continues to grow and change.

Three things to consider: •

- Consider meeting with employees that are already successfully completing tasks. You may uncover useful techniques that can be taught during training to other employees.
- Keep surveys brief. More employees will be willing to complete them and tallying the results will be more manageable.
- Good hand-written notes should be taken during a focus group and consideration should be given to either audio taping or video taping the session allowing it to be reviewed later for any details initially missed.

